

STOREFRONT

ART AND ARCHITECTURE

P R E S S R E L E A S E

PRESSURE BUILDINGS AND BLACKOUTS

by

Mark West

September 26-October 31, 1992

Gallery Hours: Tuesday-Saturday 12-6 pm

Opening Reception: September 26, Saturday, 6-8pm

Pressure Buildings and Blackouts is an installation/exhibition by Mark West. Pressure Buildings, a site-specific installation of West's system of forming concrete by using flexible and permeable fabrics, will be constructed within the exhibition space and project out onto the facade of Storefront through a series of openings. The shape of Storefront itself is analogous to the rigid form works that traditionally shape concrete, from which West's concrete will ooze-out into a free form on the facade. Blackouts, a series of drawings made by erasing and blackening collaged images, will be exhibited inside. The Intents of project are to remove the frameworks that restrict physical formation [Pressure Buildings] and visual observation [Blackouts], and to engage art, architecture and technology simultaneously.

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Pressure Buildings

For the past four years, Mark West has developed a method of forming concrete by using a fabric tension membrane in place of the traditional plywood forms. Using high strength industrial fabrics that are both flexible and permeable, he has been able to produce the forms that retain the original liquid state of concrete. The result are entirely new territory of forms for architecture and a potential to 'soften' the rigidity of constructed environments.

The key to his method is the fact that liquid is most efficiently contained by a tension membrane (as opposed to the wooden boxes used in traditional formwork technology). In the formwork made of fabrics, the weight of concrete deflects in accordance with gravity to naturally create the exact tensile for a highly efficient and resilient, structure. It is worth noting that the structure in traditional rigid wooden formwork serves solely to inhibit the deflection of these forms under the hydrostatic pressure of the wet concrete. A high price is thus inevitably paid when liquid concrete is forced into the planar geometry of these wooden containers.

With water-permeable fabric membrane the water-cement ratio of the placed concrete is reduced, thus producing a stronger member than from using wood forms (which tend to retain more water than is desirable). The fabric also ensures a very fine finish to the concrete surface because the small air bubbles that usually appear on the surface of concrete structure are, along with the excess mixing water, forced

out through the membrane. As a result, a very high quality finish can be achieved almost as a matter of course by using certain fabrics.

The use of fabric lets gravity to shape concrete, more specifically the dead load of material itself. Fabric lets the material to find its own way, and allows the liquid nature of 'wet' concrete to express itself in the final architectural form. These experiments by Mark West foresees architecture whose geometric determinants are expanded to include those dictated by random events, and by so called chaotic form and geometry.

Blackouts

Blackouts are a series of drawings by erasing. West first starts with collages made of found photographs and drawings and then redraws them by blackening them with graphite. The graphite works over the original images beyond their recognition, and blends and shadows them into a field of images and shapes bound to each other almost endlessly.

But Blackouts are more than simply erasing and blending of images. They erase the authority of perspective system in the delineation and representation of the world and its images, and even by-passes the system of multi-foci that offers separate views simultaneously. Suggested here is the use of indeterminacy and blindness as a way of seeing things, and that the blindness caused by removing light shone upon the objects--the lighting principle of the perspective system that illuminates all objects visible or to be viewed from a single point--may bring forth object's own presence and light, and create further seeing in the darkness through their transparency. The question raised here is does the traditional system of illuminating and seeing really shows everything (The ceramic pottery of Kyoro period in Korea were made to be seen in darkness or under the moon).

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Blackouts no longer questions the finding of things that are not yet seen, but seeing things in a different way. With the visible proliferated more than our capacity to see, to see now begins with what not to see, therefore the blindness, and to see more than what is visible requires their transparency. Being erased in Blackouts are not the objects but the system, reducing its lines and structure of sight into a field of transparency and mutation. With the structure of authority now invisible and the center of perspective removed, objects now overlap and fuse into each other into a field of independence and interdependence. Dead is the center of vision, replaced by the periphery of vision.

One concrete yet free (Pressure Buildings) and the other visual yet blind (Blackouts), they together question traditional rigidity in the making of the forms and seeing of the world. Both are projects to explore more than to oppose, and to add rather than simply denounce. The link between the two is to escape the mold of physical and visual, and to see and make in dark with vagrancy.

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